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Globalization and its impact on the full enjoyment of all human rights

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 67/165, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to seek further the views of Member States and relevant agencies of the United Nations system and to submit to the Assembly at its sixty-eighth session a substantive report on the subject based on those views, including recommendations on ways to address the impact of globalization on the full enjoyment of all human rights. The present report summarizes the views received from the Governments of Azerbaijan, Cameroon, Columbia, Cuba, Guatemala, Iraq, Lebanon, Mauritius, Oman, Thailand, Ukraine and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), as well as from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization, the International Telecommunication Union and the World Meteorological Organization. It concludes by identifying common themes and making recommendations on how to address the impact of globalization on the full enjoyment of all human rights.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 67/165, the General Assembly took note of the report of the Secretary-General on globalization and its impact on the full enjoyment of all human rights (A/67/163) and requested the Secretary-General to continue to seek further the views of Member States and relevant agencies of the United Nations system and to submit to the Assembly at its sixty-eighth session a substantive report on the subject based on those views, including recommendations on ways to address the impact of globalization on the full enjoyment of all human rights.

2. Pursuant to that request, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) sent a request on 26 March 2013 to Member States and relevant agencies of the United Nations system for their views on the issue. As of 4 July 2013, OHCHR had received responses from the Governments of Azerbaijan, Cameroon, Columbia, Cuba, Guatemala, Iraq, Lebanon, Mauritius, Oman, Thailand, Ukraine and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of),[1] as well as from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).[2] The responses are summarized below.

II. Replies received

A. Member States

Azerbaijan

3. The Government of Azerbaijan[3] described globalization as a political, legal, economic and social process with widespread human rights implications and called for fair globalization. In that regard, Azerbaijan made reference to its own efforts to eradicate poverty through social welfare programmes and the promotion of sustainable growth as well as to its active role in the establishment of the Food Safety Institution of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. In addition, Azerbaijan emphasized the importance of regulating migration processes and guaranteeing the full protection of migrants' rights in an increasingly globalized world. Azerbaijan asserted that it has taken measures in cooperation with other States and international organizations aimed at the legalization of migrant workers and the promotion of legal migration. The Republic of Azerbaijan has signed bilateral agreements in cooperation with Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, which are designed to protect migrant workers' rights and simplify employment procedures. In the context of migration, Azerbaijan also actively works to ensure the protection of the rights of its own citizens and the development of international legal frameworks for migration, asylum, visas and voluntary return.

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[1] The submission of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was received pursuant to General Assembly resolution 66/161, after the deadline for inclusion in the 2012 report. That submission is therefore included in the present report.

[2] The texts of the original submissions are on file with the Secretariat and are available for consultation.

[3] The Government of Azerbaijan sent three separate submissions, which are synthesized here.

Cameroon

4. The Government of Cameroon stated that globalization has reinforced inequality between countries and has important economic, environmental and social impacts. It has weakened countries, rendering them vulnerable to such economic shocks as the 2008 financial crisis. It also stated that the financial crisis continues to have major economic, social, cultural, environmental and human rights impacts in Cameroon, where the resulting slow-down in economic activity has led to higher costs of living and increased unemployment. As a result, enjoyment of the rights to development, health and social security has been compromised for some people in Cameroon. In order to prevent such negative impacts on the full enjoyment of human rights, Cameroon recommended the effective implementation of the right to development, a structural reform of the financial system and improved global governance.

Colombia

5. The Government of Colombia stated that development cannot occur through economic growth alone but must also include an equitable sharing of its benefits. Social development and equality of opportunity are necessary for the creation of a more productive, healthy and educated society. In order to deal with the impacts of globalization on the full enjoyment of human rights, Colombia therefore finds it essential to examine the role of social determinants on that enjoyment. Transformative social change is necessary in order for the entire population of Colombia to be able to improve its quality of life and fully enjoy its human rights.

6. In order to achieve such a change, Colombia has designed a two-prong strategy for applying and promoting human rights. First, it is pursuing the eradication of poverty in all its dimensions. For that purpose, Colombia has developed a multidimensional poverty index that incorporates education, access to work, access to health, housing conditions and other relevant factors. Second, Colombia is working to reduce inequality and to promote equal opportunity for marginalized and disadvantaged groups and individuals. Efforts include providing employment opportunities, safeguarding plans for indigenous communities and designing a gender policy to promote gender equality. In addition, Colombia is taking measures to protect the environment, promote sustainable development and increase access to information and communication technologies.

Cuba

7. The Government of Cuba stated that the United Nations, in particular the General Assembly, should be the forum for addressing the process of globalization because it is the most universal and representative body. According to Cuba, globalization has had a significant impact on the global economy, resulting in the progressive reduction of the voice of vulnerable countries, the destruction of the cultural identities of vulnerable peoples and environmental deterioration. While globalization could be a positive force for change, the current unequal distribution of the costs and benefits of globalization between developed and developing countries exacerbates the challenges faced by developing countries. Cuba lamented that, well into the twenty-first century, hundreds of millions of people are unable to satisfy their basic needs. The financial crisis has worsened the situations of millions

of people and reduced the ability of States to provide basic public services and to protect economic, social and cultural rights.

8. Cuba believes that the global economic crisis, war, the carbon-based economy, environmental harm and poor health all reflect systemic flaws in the process of neoliberal globalization. The process constitutes a form of neocolonialism by transnational corporations and developed economies that supports unsustainable patterns of production and consumption. In developing countries, the resulting negative environmental impacts are directly linked to poverty. Cuba noted that insufficient measures have been taken to appropriately promote the potential benefits of globalization by, for example, facilitating migration and technology transfer.

9. In order to address such issues, Cuba called for the establishment of development as a central element of the international economic agenda with the objectives of eradicating poverty and eliminating inequality. Cuba is convinced that if the political will existed in developed countries, they could promote the rights to life and development for millions of people with relatively few resources. In that regard, Cuba highlighted the importance of development assistance, special and differential treatment for developing countries, the replacement of international financial institutions, and the democratization and reform of the United Nations itself.

Guatemala

10. The Government of Guatemala reported on its actions to create a favourable environment for sustainable and equitable development in an increasingly globalized world. Guatemala stated that globalization is an independent process driven by economic growth, technology and human connectivity. The peace accords that ended Guatemala's internal armed conflict were developed under the framework of globalization, which can improve the economy and promote respect for human rights, protection of the environment and respect for cultural diversity. However, globalization can affect each country differently and renders States vulnerable to both positive and negative impacts. In addition to being an economic process of growing interdependence between States, globalization has social, political, environmental, cultural and legal dimensions that can affect the enjoyment of human rights. According to Guatemala, globalization and the increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of a few are a threat to efforts to eradicate poverty. Negative impacts include the exploitation of natural resources in poor countries and the resulting harm to the environment.

11. Despite the global financial crisis, Guatemala's economy has continued to grow, and it is the leading economy in the Central American region. Guatemala intends to continue to grow by creating an environment attractive to foreign investment and by combating poverty and structural inequalities. Its programmes to fight hunger, protect the life and property of its citizens, generate employment and increase public financing are designed to protect its population against the potential negative impacts of globalization. Specific programmes are in place to help children, older persons, persons affected by disasters and those living in extreme poverty.

12. Guatemala is also very aware of the increasing levels of migration into and out of Guatemala. For that reason, it has developed a variety of programmes to protect

and assist Guatemalans, in particular those migrating to Mexico and the United States of America, countries where Guatemala engages in regular advocacy on behalf of migrants. Finally, Guatemala is concerned by the potential negative environmental impacts of globalization, resource exploitation and fossil fuel consumption. Its Ministry of Environment is therefore developing and implementing various programmes to protect and preserve the environment and maximize the use of resources. Through those various measures, Guatemala hopes to mitigate the potential negative impacts of globalization, especially on its most vulnerable populations.

Iraq

13. The Government of Iraq stated that globalization can have a significant impact on economic, social and cultural rights, and that its positive and negative consequences can influence the full enjoyment of human rights. This presents a challenge for all countries; it is therefore important to use every resource and means available to preserve human rights and to guarantee that they are respected in all States. According to Iraq, the United Nations has a duty to ensure the freedom of commercial exchanges between countries, in particular as it relates to the right to food. Iraq suggests that the United Nations place a priority on programmes that are designed to increase access to food and to end the fight against hunger.

14. Iraq describes globalization as a two-way process in which all States should cooperate to protect human rights while also respecting each other's social and cultural diversity. In that context, Iraq cautioned against power imbalances in international bodies and mechanisms that permit some States to exercise more power during decision-making processes, leading to a situation where human rights are not respected and globalization can have negative impacts. For example, the 2008 financial crisis had negative impacts on human rights, including with regard to access to food, privacy and individual rights.

Lebanon

15. The Government of Lebanon stated that it pays particular attention to the impacts of globalization on people and their rights, including the rights of women, children and disabled persons. As a consequence of globalization, women are increasingly moving in search of educational and employment opportunities, with the resulting need for an expanded focus on women's rights. On 12 June 2012, the Ministry of Social Affairs of Lebanon adopted a national strategy for women, which includes special programmes for the protection of their rights. Lebanon has also designed programmes to protect children's rights and fight child abuse; and to protect disabled people and improve the social programmes that assist them.

Mauritius

16. The Government of Mauritius observed that its economy has grown in recent years despite the global economic crisis; however, competition spurred by globalization makes it difficult for young people, in particular the poor and those without adequate training and education, to find employment. Mauritius has therefore established the elimination of extreme poverty, and poverty in general, as top priorities. Mauritius has made major strides through its national development process, which emphasizes, inter alia, child and family development, education,

social housing, economic empowerment and vocational training. Mauritius has implemented specific measures designed to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality, empower women and expand the global partnership for development.

17. In particular, Mauritius reported significant progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and described the outcome of its national consultation process for the post-2015 development agenda. Mauritius also described a variety of programmes and development plans designed to promote sustainable development, including a corporate social responsibility tax with proceeds dedicated to development projects.

Oman

18. The Government of Oman emphasized the importance of heeding all of the consequences of globalization, not just its economic impacts. Oman called for the full enjoyment of all human rights to be realized in a manner that respects State sovereignty and diverse social and cultural norms. In Oman, it is critical that the rights of men and women are respected in their totality and in the context of the family values, children's rights and inheritance laws that define the culture of the country. Oman highlighted the importance of preventing globalization from having a negative impact on human rights and on social and cultural norms. Oman also called for a dialogue on the impacts of development and globalization on State security and equality for all.

Thailand

19. The Government of Thailand stated that globalization affects different groups of people in society differently but that its negative impacts are heightened in developing countries, where poverty is prevalent. For Thailand, globalization produces not only economic opportunities but also social and environmental challenges, which can affect the full enjoyment of human rights. The negative impacts of globalization can include growing inequality and the violation of the rights of migrant workers and other vulnerable groups. Thailand has developed a number of initiatives to address the negative impacts of globalization and ensure the equitable sharing of its benefits. The measures have addressed issues such as the promotion of corporate social responsibility, the promotion of the rights of migrant workers, especially female migrant workers, and the reduction of income inequality. According to Thailand, globalization may deepen income inequality and adversely affect the enjoyment of human rights. Thailand addresses structural inequality by ensuring the fair distribution of land and resources, providing social security to all groups and empowering local communities to participate in their own management, including through the protection of their rights to a clean environment and the preservation of their cultures. By doing so, Thailand seeks to ensure that globalization is inclusive and equitable, and has a human face.

Ukraine

20. The Government of Ukraine observed that globalization forces diverse cultures to coexist and that it can have significant cultural impacts. Because of its multicultural population, Ukraine pays special attention to the protection of human rights, in particular the cultural rights of minorities. Ukraine's policies promote

harmonious development, tolerance, and equal economic, social and political opportunities, regardless of gender, ethnicity, race, origin, social status, religious beliefs, language or place of residence. For example, Ukraine has developed a strategy for the protection and integration of the Roma minority into Ukrainian society. In addition, the State Migration Policy of Ukraine includes measures to combat racism, xenophobia and religious intolerance, and to promote tolerance towards migrants.

Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

21. The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela stated that human rights formed a central component of its Constitution and that it was guided by the principles of honesty, participation, transparency, accountability and efficiency. According to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the impacts of globalization on human rights include impacts in the development sphere, where the global financial crisis threatens efforts to improve people's lives in developing and developed countries alike. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela urged that efforts to mobilize resources in response to the crisis must work to combat poverty, improve quality of life and promote sustainable development, and that developing countries should not pay for the mistakes of developed countries. For that reason, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela called for a shift from the neoliberal economic model that produces growing inequality and strips countries of sovereignty over their natural resources to a new people-centred development paradigm designed to eradicate poverty and hunger, champion the rights of the marginalized and disadvantaged, and promote human rights, including the right to development.

22. The objective of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is to implement a social policy that eradicates poverty and promotes social inclusion, in order to guarantee human dignity. To that end, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela employs a multidimensional concept of poverty that measures inequality in the political and social spheres in addition to economic inequality. In order to fight against all forms of poverty, the Government has developed programmes called "social missions", which are designed to promote the rights of the marginalized and disadvantaged through various forms of State assistance. As a result of the programmes, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela claims to have drastically reduced its poverty rate and achieved the most equal society in the region.

23. However, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela remains concerned about the issue of food security, calling for the reform of the World Trade Organization and the elimination of its neoliberal policies that threaten food security in developing countries. Similarly, and in response to the financial crisis, the Government called for the reform of the international financial system and the Bretton Woods institutions, and believes that economic and financial policymaking should take place in the General Assembly and not in the Group of 20. For its own part, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has taken action through its social missions and national development plans to protect its citizens from the impacts of the financial crisis. In addition to providing economic and social relief for the disadvantaged and marginalized, the policies are designed to promote the active involvement and participation of Venezuelans in deciding their own future. In that regard, the Government notes that the issue of corporate responsibility is increasingly important, especially given the proliferation of bilateral investment treaties

protecting investor rights, and called for active measures to be taken to guarantee the compliance of all businesses with their human rights obligations.

B. United Nations organizations

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

24. FAO stated that its activities are dedicated to promoting fair globalization and sustainable development. It works with multilateral mechanisms, States and other relevant actors to provide technical and policy support in the areas of food, agriculture, rural development and the sustainable use of natural resources, with the overarching objective of fighting hunger and malnutrition. FAO promotes a right-to-food approach in development policies. A significant part of its work relates to the drafting of international treaties pertaining to food and agriculture. That work involves globalizing international best practices and is guided by human rights law and the principle of sustainable development. The principle of sustainable development and its three pillars, namely, economic, environmental and social development, guide the work of FAO in providing assistance to its member countries on agricultural production and for the management and use of natural resources, including water, forests, land and fisheries.

25. FAO described several of its programmatic activities and publications relevant to the right to food, globalization and sustainable development. For example, FAO provides platforms for dialogue and the development of standards through its Committee on World Food Security, which developed the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security and the Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition. FAO also worked with other international organizations to develop and promote principles for responsible agricultural investment and works with development banks to integrate social analysis in the design, supervision and development of rural development projects. FAO activities at the State level include integrating social impact analysis in relevant legislation, implementing activities to promote fair globalization and sustainable development in Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania, and promoting market access and access to credit for small farmers.

International Labour Organization

26. ILO submitted a list of its recent publications relevant to globalization and human rights, including: *General Survey on the Fundamental Conventions concerning Rights at Work in Light of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, 2008: Giving Globalization a Human Face; Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work: From Commitment to Action*, prepared for a recurrent discussion under the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization and the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (International Labour Conference, June 2012); and *World of Work Report 2012: Better Jobs for a Better Economy*. In addition, it referred to the 2004 report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization entitled *A Fair Globalization: Creating Opportunities for All*.

International Telecommunication Union

27. The International Telecommunication Union observed that many people experienced globalization for the first time through the use of information and communications technology. ITU monitors the international digital divide; however, its work also extends to sustainable development, including through the participation of an ITU delegation at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012, and its leadership of the Dynamic Coalition on Internet and Climate Change. ITU also commented that access to information and communication technologies is basic to the human rights of freedom of opinion and expression even though there remains some controversy over whether or not there is a right to, for example, broadband access. ITU has actively fostered debate over that issue and claims that while there is widespread agreement on communication being a human need, as well as a fundamental right, there is not such agreement over whether or not the right to communicate can be tied to any particular technology or means of access. If access to broadband is a fundamental right, girls and women should enjoy the same rights of access to the global information society that boys and men do. For that reason, ITU is actively engaged in promoting gender equality in respect of access to the Internet. As a whole, ITU seeks to ensure that the impact of globalization is fair and that the use of information and communications technology contributes to sustainable development and the enjoyment of human rights equally by all people everywhere.

World Meteorological Organization

28. The World Meteorological Organization believes that the globalization of the economy, of finance, of the movements of people and of ideas plays a key role in matters related to weather, climate and water, as elements of both the biophysical environment and the discussion on ways and means to progress towards the achievements of the internationally agreed development goals. Globalization can be both beneficial to humanity and harmful to it. WMO aims to exploit the benefits of globalization while limiting the harm, in order to advance the ability of people to fully enjoy their human rights, including the rights to life, food, water and energy. WMO observed that urbanization, climate change, extreme weather events and the elimination of traditional agricultural and pastoral practices are the results of globalization that have potential negative impacts on human rights.

29. However, globalization has also produced technological advances that permit improved drought predictions and resilience, risk reduction and disaster management. In its work in the fields of weather, climate and water, WMO aims to ensure that the science and information services made possible by worldwide cooperation contribute to the enjoyment of human rights by countering the negative impacts of globalization. For example, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change of the WMO/United Nations Environment Programme provides invaluable assessments to policymakers responsible for guiding humanity's response to human-induced climate change, and the recently established Global Framework for Climate Services improves climate service delivery in four priority areas, namely, disaster risk management, water management, health, and agriculture and food security. WMO also works extensively on drought risk management and is pursuing innovative tactics, including public-private partnerships such as the one employed to

develop a telecommunications-based early warning system for extreme weather events in Lake Victoria.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

30. **The present report summarizes responses from States and relevant agencies of the United Nations system regarding globalization and the enjoyment of human rights. All respondents agree that globalization is a process having important human rights implications and economic, social, cultural, political, environmental, intellectual, technological and legal dimensions. Responses indicate that globalization poses both opportunities for, and challenges to, the full enjoyment of human rights. Respondent States expressed their concerns about, among other issues, migration, threats to cultural diversity, international power imbalances and the failure of democratic governance, corporate social responsibility, climate change and the environment, food security and growing inequality.**

31. **Most State respondents emphasized the importance of investment in social welfare programmes to protect their citizens against the potential negative impacts of globalization. The programmes typically focused on improving access to education, training, health care and basic necessities among marginalized and disadvantaged groups and individuals. In the context of the enjoyment of human rights, some State respondents suggested strategies and measures to protect their countries against the negative impacts of the financial crisis and the neoliberal form of globalization.**

32. **Respondent agencies of the United Nations system summarized their efforts to protect the full enjoyment of human rights in the context of globalization. They described specific measures and policies designed to promote the rights to food, freedom of expression and gender equality in Member States. They emphasized the need to leverage the positive aspects of globalization, technological advances, information-sharing and multilateral cooperation in addressing the potential negative impacts related to, for example, climate change, food security and urbanization.**

33. **There is a growing call from States to take measures to ensure protection against the potential negative impacts of globalization and to ensure the equitable distribution of its benefits. Domestic programmes designed to provide basic levels of social protection are critical to such efforts; however, in a globalizing world, international cooperation is also essential. Recommendations for the mitigation of negative impacts on the full enjoyment of human rights included the effective implementation of the right to development, structural reform of the financial system and improved global governance. Where possible, the agencies of the United Nations system should provide technical support and multilateral platforms for dialogue in order to identify, promote and elaborate upon measures and technology that can equitably distribute the benefits of globalization while mitigating its negative impacts on the full enjoyment of human rights.**